

SAN VICENTE REDWOODS CONSERVATION EASEMENT FACTS



Photo by William K. Matthias, 2011

INTRODUCING A VAST FOREST

San Vicente Redwoods (formerly known as the CEMEX Redwoods property) is located just north of Davenport, less than an hour from the bustle of California's Silicon Valley. This 8,852-acre open space is home to at least **90 ancient redwoods** and connects about 27,500 acres of contiguous protected land, providing habitat for **rare animals and plants** including the **endangered California red-legged frog**, endangered **coho salmon** and threatened **steelhead trout** that live downstream from the property. San Vicente Redwoods' streams provide **crucial drinking water**, and its 70 miles of unpaved roads offer **outstanding potential for public recreation**.

CONSERVATION PARTNERS

San Vicente Redwoods **needs careful restoration and permanent legal protection**. In 2011, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) and Sempervirens Fund purchased the property to avoid the immediate threat of subdivision and private development. Because neither POST nor Sempervirens Fund has the capacity to hold the property over the long term, the organizations plan to sell or trade San Vicente Redwoods – after it is protected by a **conservation easement** – to a sustainable timber harvest company or another third-party buyer. Save the Redwoods League plans to hold the conservation easement on the property, allowing **public recreation, scientific research and educational activities as well as sustainable timber harvest on portions of the property**. The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County is leading the effort to plan for public access, which will enable the public to enjoy the property without damaging its natural resources and while respecting the neighbors.

CONSERVATION PLAN

The partner organizations developed a conservation plan that will protect this special place in perpetuity. Based on several factors, including the historic use of the property and its natural resources, the plan divides the property into three zones:

- **Working forest**, which will continue to be harvested under strict guidelines for sustainability and environmental sensitivity
- **Preservation reserves**, identified as the most sensitive areas, to be managed for the protection of ecological resources, and
- **Restoration reserves**, where forest management and other activity may be conducted to restore the habitat to its natural state

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

A conservation easement, sometimes called a conservation agreement or land protection agreement, is among the tools that organizations including Save the Redwoods League use to protect important lands. It is a **voluntary contract between the landowner (POST and Sempervirens) and the League** that permanently limits the uses of the land to **protect its natural resources**. The contract allows the landowner to continue to own and use the land subject to the terms of the easement. In making the agreement, the League agrees to monitor the land forever to ensure compliance with its terms.

TERMS OF THE SAN VICENTE REDWOODS CONSERVATION EASEMENT

The conservation easement will **protect San Vicente Redwoods' forests, waterways and other habitats** while allowing **sustainable forest management** on portions of the property, as well as public access and some other **limited uses** (e.g. restoration work and scientific research). **Subdivision will be prohibited** and all **development rights will be extinguished**, other than the right to build extremely limited infrastructure onsite to support public access or other limited uses such as scientific research.

The landowner may **manage the property for timber harvesting and grazing animals** for vegetative management, all as directed by management plans prepared by the conservation partners. In addition, the landowner retains the usual rights and obligations of ownership, such as maintaining roads and fences, constructing utilities (which can include solar) for use on the property, and controlling non-native species. The landowner may also apply for carbon credits for forest growth that exceeds the amount required to be retained under the conservation easement.

The landowner **may not conduct commercial activities** (other than timber harvest and grazing), may not develop oil, gas or geothermal resources, and may not degrade the soil, disturb archaeological sites, or intentionally introduce non-native species. In addition, the landowner must **protect riparian areas**.

FUNDING

The State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) approved a \$1.9 million grant to the League for the easement. The League is also applying to the California Wildlife Conservation Board for \$10 million. The SCC granted \$100,000 to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County to develop the public access plan.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact Catherine Elliott, Land Project Manager at Save the Redwoods League, at celliot@SaveTheRedwoods.org or (415) 820-5829. Visit SaveTheRedwoods.org for more information about San Vicente Redwoods, including maps of the property.



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